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ABSTRACT

Higher education has made great progress in creating open organizational classroom environments for diverse populations. However, little research has been published on the experiences of lesbians and gay men in colleges and universities. A study identified the extent to which higher education is creating an open and comfortable environment for lesbians and gay men. The study examined lesbian and gay organizational and classroom experiences in higher education; it also solicited information on specific strategies that lesbian and gay educators and administrators are using to enhance those experiences. A sample group of 47 subjects responded to the survey (representing a response rate of 84%). A supplemental procedure yielded five participants who were members of a university-wide gay and lesbian caucus; thus, 52 was the total number of survey participants. Strict confidentiality was maintained, and subjects were not asked to identify themselves in any way. The survey revealed that lesbians and gays encounter fairly positive experiences in academic organizations and within the classroom; they are also actively working to enhance those environments through a variety of empowerment strategies. (Contains two tables of data and 64 references.) (Author/NKA)

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Experiences of Sexual Minorities in Higher Education:

A Survey of Lesbian and Gay Scholars

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RUNNING HEAD: Experiences of Sexual Minorities

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Abstract

Higher education has made great progress in creating open organizational and classroom environments for diverse populations. However, little research has been published on the experiences of lesbians and gay men in colleges and universities. The purpose of this study is to identify the extent to which higher education is creating an open and comfortable environment for lesbians and gay men. Toward that end, the study presents the results of a survey that examined lesbian and gay organizational and classroom experiences in higher education; the survey also solicited information on specific strategies that lesbian and gay educators and administrators are using to enhance those experiences. The survey revealed that lesbians and gays encounter fairly positive experiences in academic organizations and within the classroom; they are also actively working to enhance those environments through a variety of empowerment strategies.

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College and university educators have made great progress in creating academic environments that are responsive to the needs of increasingly diverse communities; part of this response has been an acknowledgment of the potentially marginalizing focus of higher education, the need to politicize that focus, and the resulting broadening of education to include the voices of those who have been positioned outside the traditional academic power structure on the basis of race, gender, religion, and nationality. The primary purpose of this study is to identify the degree to which higher education is responding to the need for greater inclusiveness of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) voices in university and college departments, curricula, and within academic disciplines; a secondary purpose is to offer recommendations for strategies that would result in an increased celebration of LGB experiences in and contributions to higher education. The following reports the results of a survey conducted on the experiences of LGB faculty and administrators and their recommendations for enhancing the diversity of higher education.

Literature Review

The following identifies the foundation for empowerment movements in higher education, the current status of LGB experiences in higher education, philosophical and historical issues which inform that status, and specific strategies being used in organizational and classroom settings to enhance inclusiveness for LGBs.

Empowerment Movements in Higher Education

Gay and lesbian inclusiveness in colleges and universities is, in part, a consequence of an empowerment approach to higher education that was first theorized in the 1960s by Paulo

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Freire (1988) through his analysis of marginalized communities and the politics of education in the United States. Freire's approach examines the politics of educational efforts that indoctrinate marginalized communities into dominant culture by associating literacy with one cultural standard (usually white Anglo-American middle class), resulting in the annihilation of diverse cultural experiences of educational participants. In response, Friere proposed a multicultural approach to education that empowers people through a celebration of diverse cultures while simultaneously connecting them with skills needed to participate in dominant culture (Giroux & McClaren, 1994). With this approach, educational institutions function to connect people with power and enable them, "to live in a society in which they have the opportunity to govern and shape history rather than be consigned to its margins" (Giroux, 1993, 368). This pedagogical approach celebrates difference, equality, and social justice.

In terms of LGB experiences, educators have identified academic environments as silencing for gay people, categorizing and denying them access to power on the basis of sexual orientation; empowerment education questions monolithic norms around which much of higher education is organized, deconstructs fixed notions of identity based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, and treats difference, rather than fixed identity, as that which constitutes, creates community among, and ultimately empowers people in academic settings (Tierney, 1993 & 1997). Of course part of the problem with such a radical shift is that it runs counter to the traditional operation of higher education which privileges compartmentalization over interdisciplinary relationships (Honeychurch, 1996; Sachsman, 1993; Smelser, 1993).

In the classroom and within the academic department, an environment of empowerment

encourages people to examine the way power works divisively within higher education and promotes a sense of connection to others and to the social environment within academia (Glasser, 1992; Casmir, 1991; Geyer, 1993; Hill, 1991; Peters, 1996; Rhoads, 1995c; Shor, 1992; Sprague, 1993; Young, 1995). Specific classroom strategies include shared learning, an emphasis on context, group experiences, and student participation in the decision-making process within the classroom (Brunson & Vogt, 1996). Educators emphasize diverse language issues, communication styles, cultural values, and experiences in class discussions, lectures, and reading materials (Hart, 1993; Sprague, 1975). Within the university as an organization, multiculturalism has been enhanced through the use of diverse speakers, cultural diversity workshops, educator instruction, departmental programs and publications; in short, all of the resources currently being used within the organization and the classroom can be used to reconsider the relationships within higher education and the way the institution can be used for empowerment rather than marginalization (Wood & Lenze, 1991).

Obstacles to LGB Inclusion in Higher Education

LGB studies programs are one of the primary and most visible ways that LGB experiences and issues have manifested themselves in higher education. These programs are a response to the increasing visibility of LGB identities, politics, and experiences on college and university campuses and, regrettably, to the resulting backlash of violence that is often directed at LGBs. While some claim that, "gay and lesbian studies is coming of age in the 1990s" (Minton, 1992, 1), others claim the response from higher education has been lukewarm at best, resulting in efforts that often maintain the separation of LGB experiences from the larger

university and reinforce LGB's position as "other" (D'Emilio, 1990; namaste, 1992). The substantive efforts that have been made incorporate LGB diversity into programs throughout the university or college and raise awareness of relevant LGB issues and experiences within all academic organizations and classrooms (Collin, 1992; Gamon, 1992); successful integration tends to occur in universities with open, liberated environments where LGBs are seen as a legitimate minority (Hekma & van der Meer, 1992).

The inclusion of LGB issues in academic settings is problematic particularly because of the volatile conditions that often define LGB life. LGBs must make themselves visible in order to foster and participate in an open professional environment; this visibility simultaneously places LGBs at risk for discrimination and even physical violence in what can be homophobic environments (Malinowitz, 1995).[1] Additionally, since being gay is in part constituted as a position that is resistant to dominant culture, the institutionalization of LGB identity in academia threatens to co-opt and de-radicalize LGB politics (Roscoe, 1992). There are clearly no simple answers to the question of how higher education can enhance LGB inclusiveness in colleges and universities; however, such inclusion, education about, and sensitivity to LGB issues and concerns are necessary for educational organizations if they are to create balanced, equitable, and affirming classroom and organizational experiences for students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Roscoe, 1995).

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[1] Scholars have also documented numerous socialization and developmental problems gay faculty and students experience because of homophobia in academic settings (Besner & Spungin, 1995; Dankmeijer, 1993; Rhoads, 1994, 1995a, & 1995b; Woog, 1995).

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Philosophical and Historical Context of LGB Experiences in Higher Education

The term, "Queer Theory," has been used to label the philosophical approach that undergirds current shifts toward inclusion of LGB voices in higher education. Queer theory is a critical approach to identity politics that deals with issues common to people experiencing same sex desire; but unlike strictly gay or lesbian studies, a queer approach to higher education involves the deconstruction of identity politics on which traditional gay and lesbian movements have been based through a cultural critique of institutions of race, gender, class, and orientation - the same critique that informs Friere's multicultural and empowerment approach (De Lauretis, 1991; Taylor, 1993). Queer theory, politics, and strategies attempt to focus on and celebrate difference within same-sex communities, examine the social construction of identity, and avoid essential-based notions of gay and lesbian identity and desire (namaste, 1992).

This move to deconstruct gay/lesbian identity and re-position it in broader terms of institutional power has had a complex impact on gay/lesbian inclusiveness. Because queer theory attempts to dislodge fixed categories of identity as a key part of a critique of institutions, it also threatens to undermine the advances made by gay and lesbian identity-based politics of the 70's and early 80's. Queer theory examines gay and lesbian identity, at least in part, ironically, as a strategy that has promised liberation, but at the cost of fixing gays and lesbians as "other" within dominant culture institutions; as part of this ironic move, queers and their desire are identified as being everywhere and within everyone (Savoy, 1994). While this offers a new way of looking at gay/lesbian concerns, it also risks diffusing the focus of

traditional gay and lesbian politics; to avoid such de-politicizing and abstraction, queer politics calls for an emphasis on the earlier gay and lesbian political critique of homophobia and heterosexism in the culture in general and in higher education in particular (Savoy, 1994).

Much of the debate over gay and lesbian studies and queer theory revolves around the historical development of the field of same-sex studies, politics, and visibility within higher education: during 1969-1976, gay studies and politics considered same-sex identity as an essential, authentic, and ultimately liberatory experience, heavily influenced by women's and civil rights movements; from 1976-present gay studies has moved away from notions of fixed identity and toward an understanding of sexual identity as a social construction; simultaneously, 1985 introduced issues of race, AIDS, and cultural studies to same-sex analyses (Escoffier, 1992). These categories offer a useful illustration of the general trends and issues for LGB that define and affect integration efforts: identity and cultural politics; essential versus social constructivist views of identity; and race, gender, and orientation as discursive sites of power (Epstein, 1987). The most contemporary approach to the academic study of same sex desire calls for queer studies to examine and understand sexual minorities in terms of multiple identities and roles they occupy, ultimately treating gays in terms of power relations rather than fixed categories (Britzman, 1995; Flanigan-Saint-Aubin, 1992; Roscoe, 1988; Weston, 1993).[2]

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[2] For examples of application of queer theory, see Abelove, Barale, & Halperin, eds. (1993), Ringer, ed. (1994), and special issues of Discourse (Kader & Piontek, "L/G Studies,"1992) & Differences (DeLauretis, "Queer Theory," 1991) for overviews of various approaches in the field; Sedgewick (1990), Doty (1993), Warner, ed. (1993), Creekmur & Doty

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Practical Steps Toward LGB Inclusiveness

Within the contemporary context of higher education and LGB identity politics, tangible and practical steps toward inclusiveness have been taken that explore the complex, shifting, and varied experiences of sexual minorities. Specific classroom strategies include the following: consciousness-raising in courses about gay and lesbian issues; reading assignments on sexual orientation; class assignments and discussion on gay and lesbian texts; class discussions on relevant issues such as coming out, health of marginalized communities, identity formation, representations of gays and lesbians, relationship with the environment, experiences of prejudice and alienation, and general empowerment; identification of and challenge to myths about marginalized identity in non-gay focused classes; specific courses dealing with gay and lesbian topics; and class discussions and assignments that focus on issues of power, discourse, and sexual identity as a way of understanding how institutions define gays and lesbians (Cady, 1992; Grossman, 1993; Newman, 1989; Nieberding, 1989; Malinowitz, 1995).

Beyond curricular changes, universities and colleges throughout the U.S. have made institutional changes including the development of degree programs in gay and lesbian studies, the addition of same-sex partners to those qualifying for institutional benefits, faculty and student organizations for gays and lesbians, and inclusion of protection of gays and lesbians in

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(1995), on readings of literary texts and popular culture; Gayer, Greyson, & Parmar (eds. (1993) and Juarez (1996) on film; Hemphill & Beam (1991) on race; Watney (1987) and Patton (1990, 1996) on AIDS and health communication.

harassment policies (Nieberding, 1989). However, as mentioned above, these programs are the exception rather than the rule, as universities traditionally tend to deny the importance of LGB experiences (D'Emilio, 1990).

Research Focus

While the above literature on gay/lesbian studies and empowerment education within institutions of higher education provides an overview of what higher education can do to enhance the academic environment for LGBs, only one study has been published on the responses of LGB scholars to their classroom or organizational environments; this study concludes that while inclusiveness of sexual minorities among institutions of higher education is on the rise, an overall, substantive, long term sense of empowerment for gay and lesbian educators is greatly lacking (McNaron, 1997). Based on these findings, the current status of empowerment movements, the philosophical and historical context of LGB identity politics, and classroom and organizational strategies of inclusion documented in the literature, this study attempts to examine the following research questions: what are the experiences of gay and lesbian educators in higher education with respect to empowerment and inclusivity within university and college organizations and the classroom; what are the strategies being used by educators and administrators to make higher education more inclusive of gay and lesbian concerns; and how widespread are these strategies of inclusion?

Methodology

To explore these research questions, the investigators employed the following methodology.

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Subjects and Sampling

The target sample for this survey consists of individuals who are self-identified as gay and lesbian scholars on college and university campuses. Obtaining a sample of gays and lesbians is difficult primarily because there are few research precedents, unreconcilable confidentiality issues, and no documented sampling frame (Liddle, Kunkel, Kick, & Hauensteim, 1996). Issues of confidentiality preclude the creation of standardized, comprehensive lists; therefore, drawing a random sample in a conventional manner is impossible. Creative methods must be employed in order to obtain as thorough a sample as possible. In response, the investigators used two forms of purposive samples (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991) in which subjects are identified in a non-random fashion because they share a particular characteristic.

To obtain the best sample possible, the investigators accessed a relatively new resource for obtaining survey participants - the Internet. Subjects were obtained in the following manner. First, a site devoted toward gay and lesbian educators was identified. Through this site, a list of electronic-mail addresses was generated of individuals who had identified themselves as gay or lesbian scholars in higher education. Initial contact was made with all individuals listed on this site via electronic-mail asking if they would be interested in participating in this survey. Only those persons who indicated that they would be willing to serve as subjects received a copy of the survey through the mail. This sampling method yielded 47 participants, representing a response rate of 84% of those mailed a survey. As a follow-up to this procedure, a network sample was employed in which participants in a study

are asked to make recommendations about other likely participants (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991). The investigators contacted members of a university-wide gay and lesbian caucus and requested that they complete the survey. In order to maintain as much consistency as possible, participants completed the surveys in private and returned them through the mail. This supplemental procedure yielded 5 participants for a total of 52 participants.

Procedures and Instrument

As noted above, subjects in the first phase of the study were initially contacted via electronic mail. Those subjects who indicated an interest in participating received a mailed copy of the self-administered questionnaire. Subjects in the second phase of the study were asked to complete the survey in private and return it through the mail. Strict confidentiality was maintained. Subjects were asked not to identify themselves in any way on the survey.

The instrument employed in the current study was revised from an instrument created by Rutgers University; this survey was originally designed to assess gay and lesbian concerns within the university community and make recommendations about strategies for responding to these concerns (Nieberding, 1989). Preliminary validity was assessed by consulting other scholars interested in gay and lesbian concerns. The instrument was revised three times in order to address initial concerns raised by these scholars. The version of the survey that was distributed was deemed to have a high level of face validity.

The present instrument was divided into three major sections. Most of the questions were closed-ended or Likert-type questions. The first section consisted of demographic data including sex, race, job classification, sexual orientation, academic department, and discipline.

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The second section addressed organizational concerns that might be experienced by gays and lesbians in colleges and universities; this section included questions concerning departmental climate, presence of discrimination, comfort level, openness, and university environment. The final section of the survey examined general pedagogical and curricular issues involved in classroom management by gays and lesbians. Topics explored in this section included: discussion of gay and lesbian issues in class, environment created for gay and lesbian students, comfort level, and inclusiveness of gay and lesbian issues in specific courses and in general course curricula. The section on pedagogical and curricular issues concluded with open-ended questions asking respondents to provide possible instructional resources for teaching about gay and lesbian experiences and strategies for including these issues in the classroom setting.

Results

The final sample consisted of 52 respondents. Using the 6.1 program of SPSS (Norusis, 1996), frequencies and percentages were computed for all closed-ended questions. The responses to open-ended questions were compiled and will be analyzed more fully in a follow-up study. The frequency and percentage analysis of the survey revealed the following results.

Part 1: Demographic Data

Sixty-three percent of those responding to the survey were male. Thirty-six percent of the sample were female. Of those, 90.4% self-identified themselves as white and 1.9% as African American. The remainder either responded other or did not respond. In terms of sexual identification, 59.6% of the subjects identified themselves as a gay man, 30.8% as

lesbian, 5.8% as heterosexual, and 3.8% as bisexual. Twenty-five different academic departments or disciplines were represented by the sample.

Part 2: Organizational Concerns

When asked to rate the environments in their department for lesbians on a scale of one to five with one being poor and five being excellent, 23% of the sample rated the environment negatively as either a 1 or 2, and 52% rated the environment positively as a 4 or 5. Similar results were obtained when asking about the departmental environment for gay men. About 15% of those responding rated the environment negatively as either a 1 or 2, and 55.8% rated the environment positively as either a 4 or 5. About 19% of the subjects perceived discrimination to be apparent in their departments with 63.5% reporting no perceived departmental discrimination. In addition, 21.2% of the sample believed that others in their departments were discriminated against while 40.4% perceived no discrimination against others. About 31% of those surveyed were unsure about the presence of discrimination against others in their departments. Similarly, when asked to rate their comfort levels in their departments on a scale of one to five with one being uncomfortable and five being very comfortable, more than 70% rated their departments positively with either a 4 or a 5. Less than 8% of the sample rated their departments negatively as either a 1 or 2.

When asked to indicate how important it was to be open about sexual identification in the work environment with one being not important and five being very important, more than 85% of the sample rated the issue high in importance at either a 4 or 5. No one responding to the survey rated the issue as unimportant at either a 1 or 2. Along with this result, 88.5%

reported being open about their sexuality in their departments with 50% of the sample responding that they were open in their classroom. Half the sample believed that sensitivity training workshops would improve the atmosphere within departments while the other half indicated that such a workshop would not be beneficial (21.2%) or were unsure (28.8%) of the benefits.

Subjects were next asked to evaluate the overall environment in their colleges or universities. When asked to rate the environment of the overall organization on a scale of one to five with one being poor and five being excellent, 44.2% of those responding rated their colleges or universities negatively with a 1 or 2 while 30.8% rated their organizations positively at a 4 or 5. When asked to compare the environment of their college or university with that in their departments, 67.3% of the subjects indicated that their department was more inclusive of lesbians and gays than the university or college, 7.7% perceived the university or college as being more inclusive, 15.4% saw the university or college and the department as being about equally inclusive, while 9.6% of the sample believed that both their university or college and their department were exclusive of lesbian and gays. The university or college offered same-sex domestic partner benefits to 26.9% of respondents; such benefits were not offered to 61.5% of the subjects with the remainder of the sample being unsure or not responding.

Subjects were then asked to evaluate the inclusiveness of their discipline. When asked to rate the inclusiveness of the discipline on a scale of one to five with one being not inclusive and five being very inclusive, 25% percent of those responding rated their discipline

negatively at a 1 or 2 with 46.1% responding positively by ranking their discipline at a 4 or 5. Respondents believed that their disciplines' perceived inclusion could be enhanced by more representation in journals (69.2%) and through more support in scholarly organizations (71.2%).

Part 3: Pedagogical and Curricular Issues

Almost eighty percent of those surveyed (78.8%) worked actively to make their classrooms inclusive of gay and lesbian issues. Less than two percent (1.9%) did not. The remainder indicated that they were somewhat active in including these issues. Along these lines, 88.5% of the sample discussed gay and lesbian topics in the classroom. The majority of the subjects (58%) believed that students were comfortable with bringing these issues into the classroom with 23.1% perceiving that students were uncomfortable with the issues.

Subjects were then asked to rate the comfort level for gays and lesbians in their classrooms. When asked to rate the environment for gay and lesbian students on a scale of one to five with one being uncomfortable and five being very comfortable, 17.3% of those responding rated the environment negatively at a 1 or 2 with 53.% rating the environment positively as a 4 or 5. When asked to use the same scale to rate the environment for themselves as a gay or lesbian educator, 3.8% rated the environment negatively at a 1 or 2 with 73.1% rating the environment positively at a 4 or 5.

Subjects were then asked to rate a variety of academic resources with regard to their potential to include gay and lesbian concerns in the curriculum. As seen in the percentages in Table 1, respondents believed that integration of gay/lesbian studies into existing courses,

increasing library holdings on gay and lesbian studies, and a separate major in gay and lesbian studies have the highest potential to include gay and lesbian concerns in the curriculum.

Table 1: Potential of Academic Resources to Include Gay and Lesbian Concerns in the Curriculum

	Very Low Potential	Some Potential	Very High Potential
Visiting Professorship in gay/ lesbian studies	23.1	32.7	36.5
An undergraduate and/or graduate major in gay/lesbian studies	11.5	26.9	53.8
A lecture series focusing on gay/lesbian issues/ culture	9.6	44.2	38.5
Separate course in gay/lesbian studies	7.7	34.6	50.0
Integration of gay/ lesbian studies into existing courses	5.8	17.3	69.2
Increasing library holdings on gay/ lesbian studies	7.7	25.0	59.6

In the final close-ended question, respondents were requested to indicate which of a number of pedagogical strategies they had used in the classroom to make their courses more inclusive of gay and lesbian issues. Subjects could check any number of the options presented. Options could be rated as most often employed to least employed and included: examples in class of gay and lesbian issues, the use of gay and/or lesbian authors, readings or discussions

on homophobia/heterosexism, examples in class of issues relating to gay men and lesbians of color, readings on gays and lesbians, readings on gender and race and their relations to gay/lesbian identity and experiences, and guest lecturers on gay and lesbian issues. Please see Table 2 for specific percentages.

Table 2: Strategies employed to make courses more inclusive of gay and lesbian issues (by percentage of respondents)

Gay and/or lesbian authors	71.2
Examples in class of gay and lesbian studies	84.6
Examples in class of issues relating to gay men and lesbians of color	61.5
Readings on gender and race and their relation to gay/lesbian identity and experiences	50.0
Readings on gays and lesbians	55.8
Readings or discussions on homophobia/heterosexism	63.5
Guest lecturers on gay and lesbian issues	28.8

The next section of this paper discusses the implications raised by this survey and presents some of its limitations and suggestions for further investigations.

Discussion

The survey results provide compelling answers to the research questions posed in this study. The following analyzes the demographics of the respondents, their experiences of inclusiveness within academic organizations and the classroom, and specific strategies being used to enhance that inclusiveness.

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Demographics

Demographically the majority of respondents, at a ratio of nearly two-to-one, were white, male, tenured faculty and administrators who self-identified as gay. The results suggest that the survey respondents who felt most comfortable responding were those in traditional positions of power with respect to race, gender, and professional security; this could also be a reflection of the demographics of the Internet mailing list used or the degree to which the call for participants or the study itself appealed to certain populations. Additionally the majority of respondents were located in liberal arts and social sciences departments and disciplines; at least for this study and its sample, these fields represent areas of interest and security for LGB scholars more than business, engineering, and the "hard" sciences.

Organizational Concerns

Respondents indicated that the overall environment in their departments was positive, with men rating their environment slightly better than women. Moreover, a majority of participants claimed that they did not feel discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, though they were unsure about whether or not others experienced similar discrimination. Twenty percent reported extremely negative organizational climates and much discrimination based on sexual orientation. While this indicates some disparity in how LGBs experience their organizational environment, a clear majority of respondents feel quite comfortable in the workplace. These results suggest that many of the LGBs in this sample are, overall, experiencing a fairly positive organizational climate within their departments.

Outside of the department is a different story. Within disciplines, the responses remain

positive, with more than two-thirds of the sample reporting that theirs were inclusive of gay and lesbian concerns; respondents agreed that increased representation in journals and more support within scholarly organizations would enhance this inclusiveness. However, university-wide, nearly half of the respondents felt that the university or college environment as a whole was poor for gays and lesbians; subjects reported that in most instances departments tended to offer much more positive environments than universities or colleges. The majority of respondents also reported that their institutions did not offer benefits for same sex partners. These results indicate that while many gay men and lesbians feel positively about their day-to-day office environment, they do not feel as supported within the setting of higher education institutions as a whole.

Questions regarding self-identification as a member of a sexual minority yielded a fairly clear consensus. While the literature reviewed on queer studies and politics indicates that fixed categories of identity based on sexual orientation are becoming increasingly problematic, a strong majority of respondents said that they thought it was important to openly identify as a gay man or lesbian in the workplace, and a majority was open about sexuality in departments and classrooms, though the results on classroom openness were more ambiguous. The freedom to openly discuss and identify oneself in terms of sexual orientation appears to be crucially important for inclusiveness efforts within academic organizations.

Pedagogical and Curricular Issues

In the classroom, the survey revealed that nearly 90% of respondents work actively to make the environment inclusive of LGBs and openly discuss relevant issues in class. Openness

about sexual minorities is seen as crucial to education and a key part of inclusiveness. Members of the sample also feel positively about the current environment in the classroom for gays and lesbians; although scholars ranked students as only moderately comfortable with gay/lesbian topics and issues in class, approximately 80% perceived the classroom to be comfortable for themselves as gay and lesbian educators and for gay and lesbian students. Though no direct causal link can be drawn, participants' experiences could be an indication that inclusiveness strategies undertaken by educators are having an effect.

In terms of enhancing course curriculum, survey participants made use of strategies of both integration and segregation. For example, of the options given, the most significant responses called for the integration of gay and lesbian studies into existing courses and increasing library holdings on gay/lesbian studies, both of which were favored in nearly 85% of the responses. Options which were more separatist in nature included visiting professorships in LGB studies - favored in 70% of the responses; and undergraduate and/or graduate majors, separate courses, and lecture series in lesbian/gay studies - each favored in at least 80% of responses. These results indicate that scholars surveyed see both trends as important to inclusiveness in course curriculum and mirror trends of gay and lesbian politics and studies programs in general.

In terms of specific strategies educators have used in the classroom, the most common was the use of examples of LGB issues and authors, both of which were used by more than 70% of the sample. Fifty to sixty-five percent used examples, discussions, and readings of issues relating to topics such as gay men and lesbians of color; gender and race and their

relation to gay/lesbian identity and experiences; gays and lesbians in general; and homophobia and heterosexism. These strategies illustrate specific efforts toward inclusion being made by gay and lesbian educators, all of which have the potential for raising awareness among students about LGB concerns, contributions, and culture. Given the demographics of the sample, it is also interesting to note that while issues of race and gender are clearly important to educators surveyed, the options which foreground these concerns as fundamentally affecting gay and lesbian identity fall in the middle rather than the most frequent range of responses. This could be a reflection of the concerns of the sample which, with the exception of sexual minority status, represents an empowered group.

Some of the most compelling information from the survey appears in written responses to open-ended questions that ask participants to list articles, films, books, and any additional strategies they have used to make the classroom and course content more inclusive of LGB concerns and experiences. Responses indicate that educators are using a variety of historical and contemporary texts on LGB topics, authors, and experiences. Several of the works mentioned, particularly the contemporary ones, also foreground issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation in the context of power relations and identity politics. Respondents' efforts include the full range of both traditional gay and recent queer studies, an indication of the historical and political foundations of the field and the breadth of intellectual work available.

Further, in discussing additional strategies used, subjects offered a variety of responses that are in line with Friere's tenets of empowerment education. Respondents repeatedly stressed the need for the following: a classroom environment that fosters open communication

and expression of all ideas; LGB faculty to serve as role models for students; educators to be open and honest about their sexual identity and issues relating to sexual minorities in ways that connect with students positively; an integration of LGB studies into mainstream academic programs and organizations as well as courses and programs devoted solely to the study of LGB issues; an understanding of the impact of power and institutions on the politics of identity based on race and gender; sensitivity to the diversity of all cultures; and coalition building that empowers people as a whole, bringing various cultures together within the environment of higher education.

In general, the results from this study are quite heartening. Though institutions of higher education certainly need improvement in terms of inclusiveness of gay and lesbian experiences, respondents to this study are clearly finding ways to create positive and affirming environments for themselves as member of sexual minorities in their organizations and within the classroom, where the future of gay and lesbian issues and concerns seems to be headed in a progressive direction.

Conclusion

Several limitations to this study are important to note. First, as mentioned earlier, the small sample size and non-random sampling method limit generalizability beyond the study's participants. Further, the closed-ended nature of all but two of the questions limited the extent to which questions reflect the full range of experiences of the target populations. Additionally, survey research as a method is limited in its ability to assess intangible political and environmental factors which certainly affect a sensitive topic like the experiences of sexual

minorities.

Still, the results from this study offer important findings indicating that gay and lesbian scholars are experiencing a degree of inclusiveness in higher education settings, and all are strongly committed to enhancing that environment. Studies such as this help identify, not only that such efforts are present, but exactly what those efforts look like in terms of specific strategies. Most importantly, studies such as this emphasize and speak from the minority perspective, a voice that is of paramount importance on the subject of inclusiveness in higher education and too often silent in research. More research is needed that explores the experiences and foregrounds the perspective of sexual minorities in higher education in order to substantively enhance the academic environment for these disempowered populations.

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